

Parental Drug Use & Hidden Harm Agenda

Learning Objectives, Agenda & Capability Framework Alignment

A 3 hour online course focusing on parental drug and alcohol use, the hidden harm to children and families, tools for assessing parenting capacity, and how to increase protective factors and access to treatment

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Company: TD Consultancy

Delivery: Online — 3 hours

Edition: 2026

Aims & Objectives of the Course

- Recognise indications of substance misuse in parents and carers and be able to refer individuals to specialist services
- Understand your responsibilities when working with a parent or carer who uses drugs or alcohol
- Identify risk and assess the impact drugs and alcohol can have on parenting capacity and the family environment
- Understand the concept of hidden harm and its implications for children living in households affected by parental substance use
- Understand environmental risk factors and how they interact with parental substance use
- Know how to ask the right questions when assessing provision of need for children
- Increase protective factors for both parents and children, and understand pathways to treatment and support

Session Agenda

Parental Drug Use & Hidden Harm: Families, Risk, Assessment & Support

10:00am Start — Welcome & Course Overview

10:10am The UK picture — scale of hidden harm and children affected by parental substance use

10:30am Overview of substances — how drugs and alcohol affect parenting capacity

10:50am Impact on families — implications for children's development, safety and wellbeing

11:05am Break (15 minutes)

11:20am Environmental risk factors — housing, poverty, domestic abuse and social isolation

11:40am Assessing provision of need — asking the right questions with families

12:00pm Risk factors — tools for assessing parents who misuse substances

12:25pm Protective factors, treatment & support — increasing resilience and accessing services

12:45pm Professional responsibilities — roles, referrals and multi-agency working

1:00pm Close & Q&A

Capability Framework Alignment

This course aligns with the Capability Framework for the Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Workforce (NHS England/ OHID, 2024), which underpins the 10-Year Strategic Plan for the Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Workforce 2024–2034.

Capability Domain (NHS England / OHID, 2024)	Framework Section
Knowledge of the nature and scale of hidden harm in the UK, including estimates of children affected by parental problematic drug use (250,000–350,000) and parental alcohol use (780,000–1.3 million)	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Application of Knowledge</i>
Knowledge of how parental drug and alcohol use affects parenting capacity, family functioning, child development and children's safety and wellbeing	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Application of Knowledge</i>
Knowledge of environmental risk factors associated with parental substance use, including domestic abuse, poverty, housing instability and social isolation	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Application of Knowledge</i>
Ability to recognise indications of substance misuse in parents and carers and refer appropriately to specialist drug, alcohol and family support services	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Engagement, Assessment and Care Planning</i>
Ability to use appropriate tools and frameworks to assess parenting capacity and the impact of substance use on provision of need for children	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Engagement, Assessment and Care Planning</i>
Ability to ask sensitive, effective questions when working with families affected by hidden harm, maintaining a child-centred focus throughout	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Engagement, Assessment and Care Planning</i>
Ability to identify and strengthen protective factors for parents and children, and support access to treatment, recovery and family support services	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Harm Reduction, Treatment and Recovery</i>
Ability to fulfil professional safeguarding responsibilities and work effectively within multi-agency frameworks when children may be at risk	<i>Drug and Alcohol Worker: Engagement, Assessment and Care Planning</i>
Recovery-oriented approach — supporting parents in treatment and recovery to build family stability, parenting confidence and recovery capital	<i>Underpinning Principle: All Roles</i>
Challenging stigma — recognising and addressing the stigma faced by parents who use drugs or alcohol, which can be a significant barrier to seeking help	<i>Underpinning Principle: All Roles</i>

Underpinning Principles Embedded in This Course

Trauma-informed care • Recovery-oriented approach • Evidence-based practice • Person-centred working • Forming a working alliance • Therapeutic optimism • Challenging stigma • Co-occurring needs and multidisciplinary working

Note: National Occupational Standards (DANOS/NOS) are retained within the National Occupational Standards library but are no longer the primary workforce development reference for the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery sector. This course uses the NHS England / OHID Capability Framework (2024) as its primary alignment standard.